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Mark Williamson: A business perspective on the delegation to Germany

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By Mark Williamson

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will lead a delegation of governmental, environmental and business leaders to Bavaria in October to study opportunities made available by the passage of Wisconsin's new "Green Tier" legislation.

Green Tier is a Wisconsin initiative that seeks to improve both environmental and economic gain by encouraging and allowing responsible companies to improve their environmental performance while boosting productivity and cutting costs. German regulators and businesses have been working cooperatively for years in ways that mirror Wisconsin's Green Tier legislation. In fact, the legislation borrowed ideas from Bavaria.

We want to understand how and why Bavarian businesses and regulators have worked together to further economic and environmental goals and examine specific initiatives and strategies that could energize economic development efforts that complement Wisconsin's commitment not only to protect the environment, but to enhance it. We are particularly interested in how a cooperative approach to growth and development works in situations where population densities are high and there are challenges to accommodate multiple needs such as energy, commerce, housing, transportation and environmental protection.

Wisconsin consumers have repeatedly told us they want us to co-locate public infrastructure facilities whenever possible as sound land use practice. We are interested in learning about Bavaria's planning process, where it has succeeded and where its remaining challenges mirror those in Wisconsin. We hope to learn from each other about the installation and operation of multiple elements of linear infrastructure in a single corridor (such as transmission lines and highways) and in multiple use corridors (such as rail, energy, communications and natural restoration). We will be speaking with officials in both the public and private sectors to learn how they work together.

Wisconsin is engaged in a critical effort to protect, sustain and ultimately to improve the economic well-being of its citizens. The success of this effort hinges on the state's ability to address the needs of economic enterprises and their employees, while continuing to protect, sustain and enhance the environmental, social and aesthetic quality of its citizens' lives.

Advocates of Green Tier argue that the magic of the legislation is that it posits the idea that these twin objectives may be complementary rather than competitive. Green Tier, they say, provides hope that it is possible, with the development of new cooperative procedures, to improve performance in both environmental and business endeavors.

We hope to prove those advocates correct and are confident that what we learn in Bavaria will go a long way toward are being about to help provide Wisconsin with the economic development opportunities it seeks while also enhancing the environment. We also hope that someday our friends in Bavaria will be able to visit Wisconsin to see how their ideas have been modified and applied for the benefit of our state.

- *Williamson is vice president with American Transmission Company.*



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